

Main Reading: **Titus** 3:1-8

Tonight, was maybe the hardest lesson I have ever had to prepare.

Not because the subject matter is difficult to say.

And **not** because these verses are so hard to understand.

But because this passage is **so** important to our Christian beliefs.

These verses are **so central** and **so** clear that it's hard for me to discuss them in a way that is worthy.

Thankfully, the first couple of verses in chapter 3 are heavily related to chapter 2's theme: good works.

[The Bible wasn't originally separated into chapters, so that's why there's a little run-over here]

Chapter 2 discussed good works in the home and in the church.

And now, in chapter 3, God is giving us some other areas where we can do good works.

v. 1 – “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities...”

Not only should Christians strive to obey God's commands,
but we must also obey the laws enforced by earthly **governments**.

There are no Bible verses that directly forbid **traffic** laws
(speed, stop, getting licensed, etc.) littering, or a **drinking** age.

The government requires you to stop at red lights and stop signs
to establish an **order** and increase driver **safety**.

One example: It wouldn't be very Christian of us to behave recklessly on the roads
and show no regard for other people's lives—there would certainly be Bible verses along these lines.

So, the government has several good laws that support human flourishing.

And it's important that we obey our government, because God has appointed. **Romans** 13:1-7

As *crummy* as the government might be sometimes...
and as often as they seem to make terrible decisions,
and as easy as it would be for me to say “*Agh! Nancy Pelosi, Gavin Newsom, and Maxine Waters* 🤢”

We need to realize that Christians are not to be anarchists, who try to overthrow government.

And yet, I am astonished by the amount of ministries and pastors that get
so consumed in their negative feelings toward authority figures
that they end up talking more about politics than they do Jesus Christ.

Anyways, because people are so sinful, we need a *little* bit of government in this world.

However, as you know, the people in government are sinful as well...

So, we obey their rules as long as they aren't forcing us to sin.

In that case, it is acceptable to disobey the laws of the land, here are some Bible examples:

Hebrew midwives: **Exodus** 1:15–17

Daniel's commitment to prayer: **Daniel** 6:6–10

Peter and the Apostles when preaching: **Acts** 5:27–32

Even in those instances of disobedience,
these believers did **not** act wild, aggressive, or outrageous...and neither should we.
Instead, we *humbly* obey God and accept the consequences—even if it's **jail** or execution.

v. 1 — “Remind them...to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,”

Whenever an opportunity presents itself, Christians need to be ready to step up and do what's right.

Maybe you feel like you've been doing this. You always try to be good,
and you're tired of seeing others around you who aren't trying so hard, have a good time...

Well, hear this verse that Paul wrote to the Galatians. **Galatians** 6:10

There were certain people in the Galatian churches who did the right things,
while the *rest* of the church was falling apart and falling behind...

Those, who were trying to please God, might've been tempted to give up,
but Paul tells them to persevere in their good works.

And the reasoning? Because there is a **blessing** coming.

❶ If you keep doing good works, you'll have **peace** of mind that you're obeying your Creator.

❷ When Jesus returns, Christians will receive a big bonus. **Matthew** 25:31-40

Jesus, there, mentioned some good works for us to do:

Like visiting those in **prison** and providing for the less fortunate.

And now, back in Titus, Paul lists some other good works:

v. 2 — "...speak evil of no one...avoid quarreling...be gentle, and...show perfect courtesy toward all people."

Maybe you think this list is *really* easy to follow, or maybe you think it's *extremely* difficult...

For those of you that think it sounds easy, maybe you need to do a deeper examination of yourself.

And for those of you who think it's hard, I want you to hear this:

You might be tempted to say:

"If you met my neighbors/coworkers/or family, you would understand why this is so hard to obey."

But remember, this is a letter to a man about the people of **Crete**...

I can almost *guarantee* you that the Cretans were *worse* than the people you deal with.

Plutarch, a historian from the 2nd century, coined this phrase: *"Playing Cretan with Cretans"*

It means **lying** to liars...He also said *this* about the people on the island:

*"They're always on the verge of revolt...the island is a haven for pirates...
these people are dissatisfied and disgruntled"*

So, if Titus could love the people on Crete, we should do the same with the people we cross paths with.

We shouldn't hold grudges, we should give others the benefit of the doubt,
and we should be the most courteous people around.

v. 3 — For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Now you may be wondering why Christians need to live in this way.

Why should we forgive others and be **polite**?

Why should we be good to others at all, *especially* when they're terrible people like the ones on Crete?

Answer: because God was good to us when we were terrible.

We used to be foolish—In one sense, you might've always been a super **smart** person.

But, before Jesus, sin made you do some *really* stupid things...

We fell for things, we believed lies, were led astray, and we made fools of ourselves.

Before Jesus came into our lives, we had *no* understanding of spiritual things.

Maybe there's an unsaved person you know, and you see them sinning like *crazy*,
and maybe they're just *unbearable* for you to be around because of it.

I want you to realize that this is *exactly* what you were like before Jesus saved you.

This was the *same* sad state of affairs in your life before God **changed** you.

And this should be a big motivator for us to participate in **evangelism**.

Maybe sometimes we look at people around us and think:

"Ehh, they don't wanna hear about Jesus, because of [this] or [that]..."

But what if someone had thought that about you?

v. 4 — *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,*

Matthew Henry, a Bible commentator from the 1600s points out that:

“God would rather have pity on us and save than destroy”

v. 5-6 — *“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,”*

This, in my opinion is one of the *most important* and informative verses in the entire Bible.

This section of Paul’s letter to Titus explains our *salvation* so well.

1) it says “He saved us” which implies that we could not save ourselves.

All *credit* for forgiveness and salvation goes to God.

There is *no way* that any of should be bragging about becoming a Christian, because God did *all* of the work here.

This has *nothing* to do with man’s efforts, ideas, or abilities. Nothing to do with acting good, “getting back in church,” or joining a Bible study—it is totally supernatural.

2) There is nothing any person can do to make himself worthy of God’s mercy.

Galatians 2:21 — If we could earn our way to Heaven, then Jesus died for nothing.

In reality, a sinner’s good works aren’t good at all—they are filthy. **Isaiah** 64:6

3) The Holy Spirit saved us through regeneration and renewal.

[Look at this little drawing on the board. *A quiz, with all 3 questions answered incorrectly*]

To fix this, you’d need more than someone to change the F to an A...

You would need someone to give you a new attempt.

And someone to take the test for you and give all the right answers.

This is what Jesus has done for each Christian. John Chrysostom (347 – 407 AD) wrote,

“God has not simply repaired us, but He has made us new”

The word Paul used in this letter is **παλιγγενεσία** paliggenesia—translated as **regeneration**.

Regeneration — “re-” means again | “-generation” means to make, create, or produce.

So, a synonym for regeneration would be **rebirth**, or what we call being born again.

Have you ever heard that phrase, “*born-again Christian?*”

In 2020, only 40% of Christians considered themselves to be born again...

the phrase comes from **John** 3:3-8 and it is *so* important.

According to Jesus, saying “born again Christian” would be really redundant...

(like saying “new innovation” or “a biography about her life”)

Every *true* Christian is **born again** and everyone that is born again is a Christian.

And birth is a good analogy here, because—think about it—

How much credit can you take for your *first* birth?

In the same way, you can’t take any credit for your new birth.

Now, you might be wondering why being born again is *so* important...let me explain:

Think about the excitement of a child being born.

We call babies “bundles of **joy**,”

People throw parties when they’re pregnant,

and we celebrate gender reveals.

But as exciting as the birth of a new baby is, as exciting as *your* own birth was,

there was something *terribly* wrong with it...David explains it in **Psalms** 51:5

Our first birth was **natural**, and the sin nature was passed onto us through our ancestors,

going all the way back to **Adam** and **Eve**.

So, we *need* a *new* birth—not another natural one where we crawl into the birth canal...

but a **supernatural** birth. That's what you need—a birth from **above**.

If you have only been **born once**, you will die *twice*. But, if you have been born *twice*, will only **die once**.

A Christian's body will die, but they'll experience **life** for all eternity.

However, someone who is not born again will die a physical death, *and* a second death (Hell).

Revelation 21:8

To recap, let's read a few more verses about regeneration, or being born again:

Ezekiel 36:25–27, 2 **Corinthians** 5:17, 1 **Peter** 1:23

v. 7 — “so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

“Justified” — this is the legal side of our salvation, whereas regeneration is actual change.

This is when the judge declares someone as innocent.

Because of Jesus, God can look at a justified person as if they *never* sinned at all.